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CATALOGUE

OF A COLLECTION OF

MODERN GREEK EMBROIDERIES

EXHIBITED AT THE

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BY

A. J. B. WACE, M.A.,
FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE

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PREFACE.

THESE few words on the development of the patterns of Greek Embroideries are the result of a study of them carried on for some time past by Mr J. L. Myres, Student of Christchurch, Oxford, Mr R. M. Dawkins, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Miss Louisa Pesel, Directress of the Royal Hellenic School of Needlework, Athens, and myself. Also Mr E. H. Minns has given most valuable assistance in tracing and arranging the patterns. This classification does not aim at being perfect or final, but is to be regarded merely as a step towards further study.

A. J. B. W.

INTRODUCTION.

I. PATTERNS.

There are two distinct Schools.

α. Oriental;
characteristics, broad surfaces and free curves.

β. Hellenic;
characteristics, lines and geometric elements.

These can be yet further divided and contain the following elemental patterns.

Oriental.

1. *Rose Spray.*

(*a*) Simple, rose, jagged leaf, and hooked stem; *e.g.* **21, 22, 34, 35, 55** and **58** (border only).

(*b*) Double, two jagged leaves; *e.g.* **31** and **32.**

(*c*) Elaborate; *e.g.* **58** (centre), **56, 57, 33, 18** and **19.**

This pattern occurs in Bokhara work, and so probably originally came from that district.

2. *Pot Plant.*

(*a*) Flower (rose, tulip, carnation); *e.g.* **46** and **54.**

(*b*) Fruit tree.

3. "*Ottoman.*" Conventional landscape, mosques, houses and cypresses.

The further westward from Asia Minor these patterns go the more geometric do they become, except in Albania.

Hellenic.

1. Belts of zigzags and lozenges: *e.g.* **8** (border), **30**, **36**, **39** and **60**.

2. Friezes of double-headed eagles, the tree of life, cocks, and Scylla; *e.g.* **5**, **26**, **38**, **39**, **42**, **43** and **60**.

These two classes of patterns occur together or separately. But they have a tendency to break up, degenerate, and produce other patterns, principally animal.

1. The lozenges often have dogs in their centres, or under Oriental influence become solid (*e.g.* Rhodian pine cone **8** and **9**). Or they lose their borders and become like stars or Maltese crosses, *e.g.* **13** and **14**. These changes in this pattern only seem to occur in the islands in the eastern Aegaean.

2. The double eagle.

This on the west side of the Aegaean breaks up into cocks that can become deer (cf. **43**), birds and small double eagles. Under the influence of the tree of life pattern it can become like a conventionalized floral pattern (cf. **38**). Further it and the cock together in a frieze can become a frieze of mannikins (cf. **60**, **39** and **6**).

On the eastern side of the Aegaean the double eagle has a great tendency to degenerate into a purely geometrical pattern. Its centre becomes a lozenge and as such often contains a dog. The lower tips of its wings sprout into cypresses, and its legs and tail break off and become two leaves. Then the whole pattern is misunderstood and inverted. It thus becomes a kind of triangle and two leaves, *v.* **24**, **25**, **26**. Each half gets taken separately; the legs and tail develop into a leaf pattern, *v.* **11**, **40**, **41**. A pattern of pairs of leaves possibly going back to the lozenge may have influenced the conventionalization of the eagle. The other piece is doubled and produces a kind of lozenge with excrescences, *v.* **27**[1].

[1] This pattern may be the result of the mutual influence of the eagle and lozenge patterns upon each other.

Application of Embroideries.

As a general rule Hellenic patterns are found only on pillow cases, bed spreads, bed curtains and holiday frocks. The Oriental patterns occur on towels, table cloths and trouser sashes: an Oriental pattern on a bed spread, *e.g.* **54**, is rare. These embroideries come principally from Western Asia Minor, the Archipelago, Cyprus and Albania. In the Greek islands a girl used (no more embroidery is now made) to begin early to embroider her household linen as a kind of *trousseau* in anticipation of her marriage. Embroidery passes from a mother to her daughters (or a mother-in-law to her daughters-in-law), and in division, if there are several daughters, the large pieces are ruthlessly cut up.

II. STITCHES.

For Oriental patterns the following are chiefly in use:

Single darning; *e.g.* **53**.
Double darning; *e.g.* **56**.
Chain; *e.g.* **32**.
Some complicated stitches to make both sides appear alike; *e.g.* **33, 19, 20**.

For Hellenic patterns we find the following used:

Crete, Herring-bone stitch, **1, 4, 5**.
Rhodes and district, Rhodian cross-stitch (one leg longer than the other); *e.g.* **27, 14, 12**.
Patmos and district, Patmian stitch (3 over to 1 under); *e.g.* **24, 25, 26, 11, 41, 36**.
Cyclades, satin stitch, **38, 42, 43**.

In Cyprus a chain stitch is chiefly used: like everything else in this island the patterns are of a mixed character.

III. DYES.

The dyes principally used for dyeing silk are vegetable.

Red. This is produced from some vegetable product brought from India. Its name in Greek is a Turkish or Persian word from which the English crimson is derived.

Brown. Various shades of brown are obtained from Valonia.

Black. To produce black the silk is first dyed with Valonia, and then steeped in vitriol. This produces a black colour, but has a bad effect on the silk, which soon rots.

Blue. This is obtained from indigo imported from India, originally through Asia Minor, Syria, and Persia.

Yellow. This is obtained from the Agnus Castus and with indigo is used to produce green[1].

Orange. This is obtained from a tree called Rhus Cotinus or in Greek *χρυσόζουλον*[2].

Mauve. Myrtle berries are used to get this colour.

Pale Blue. How this is procured we do not know; it may be obtained by a weak solution of indigo, but this seems rather impossible.

[1] *v.* Walpole, *Travels in Levant*, 1. p. 239. 14.
[2] Walpole, *op. cit.*, pp. 238, 9.

CATALOGUE OF EMBROIDERIES.

1. Crete: fragments of bed curtain. Tree of life growing in pot with birds perched on it and guarded by snakes.
2. Crete: similar fragments.
3. Crete: similar fragments.
4. Crete: floral scroll with birds within narrow border, probably a degeneration of **5**.
5. Crete: lozenge pattern that has become floral with birds in it, within a border formed of the double eagles, the tree of life and Scylla.
6. Crete: modern towel. Worked in wool: frieze of mannikins, a degeneration of the frieze of cocks and double eagles (intermediate stage shewn by **39**).
7. Karpathos: bottom of skirt. Perhaps a development of the lozenge pattern under the influence of the Rhodian "pine cone," *v.* **10, 13, 15.**
8. Rhodes: bottom of skirt. Zigzag stitch; pattern of lozenge shaped "pine cones."
9. Rhodes: fragment. "Pine cone" pattern: cross stitch.
10. Rhodes: pillow case. "Pine cone" pattern: cross stitch.
11. Rhodes: pillow case. Leaf pattern developed from double eagle, *v.* **26.** Patmian stitch.
12. Rhodes: pillow case. Lozenge pattern; Patmian stitch.
13. Rhodes: fragment of bed curtain. Star pattern developed from lozenge. Patmian stitch.

14. Rhodes (?): pillow case: cross stitch. Maltese cross pattern developed from lozenge. Very old piece.

15. Rhodes: woman's dress. Pine cone pattern on skirt: cross stitch.

16. Rhodes district: towel. Rose spray.

17. Rhodes district: towel. Rose spray.

18. Rhodes district: trouser sash ends. Rose spray.

19. Rhodes district: trouser sash ends. Rose spray.

20. Rhodes district: rose spray.

21. Rhodes district: towel. Rose spray.

22. Rhodes district: towel. Rose spray.

23. Rhodes district: pillow case. Lion of St Mark degenerate: abnormal piece.

24. Patmos district: fragment of bed curtain. Patmian stitch. In centre degenerate double eagle inverted; it has produced cypresses, cocks, and in its centre a dog: border of stars (lozenge pattern).

25. Patmos district: Patmian stitch. Degenerate double eagle pattern.

26. Patmos district: Patmian stitch: fragment of bed curtain. Degenerate double eagle inverted. The two cypresses form the bottom ends of the wings and the two red leaves the legs and tail. These leaves are used separately as a distinct leaf pattern, *v.* **11**.

27. Astypalaea: cross stitch. Central pattern is probably developed from the degenerate double eagle, *v.* **26**. A fairly modern piece.

28. Budrum (Halicarnassus): trouser sash. Rose spray.

29. Chios: table cloth. This seems to be a floral pattern that has become geometric under Greek influence.

30. Mitylene (Lesbos): pillow case. Degenerate double eagle (cf. **26**) with border of lozenge pattern. Satin stitch.

31. Mitylene (Lesbos): towel. Double rose spray. Double darning stitch.

32. Adramyttium: hanging. Double rose spray: chain stitch.

33. Kinik (Pergamum district): towel. Elaborate rose spray. Modern work.

34. Aidin (Tralles): towel. Rose spray.

35. Smyrna: rose spray. Modern work.

36. Thera: half bed spread. Lozenge pattern: Patmian stitch.

37. Anaphe: head dress.

38. Siphnos district: border of half bed spread. Frieze of cocks, tree of life, and degenerate double-headed eagle.

39. Paros. Frieze of mannikins derived from a degenerate double-headed eagle and cock pattern. This is an intermediate stage between **60** and **6**.

40. Naxos. Patmian stitch. Leaf pattern derived from double-headed eagle's legs and tail, *v.* **26**.

41. Amorgos; half bed spread. Leaf pattern, *v.* **40**: Patmian stitch.

42. Mykonos: fragment of hanging. Satin stitch. Belts of zigzag pattern in drawn thread through the piece. Between these are mannikins, deer, birds and another quadruped all produced by the degeneration and breaking up of the double-headed eagle. There are also friezes of double-headed eagles, cocks, and trees of life.

43. Mykonos: half bed spread. Satin stitch. Frieze of tree of life, cocks, and degenerate double-headed eagle.

44. Mykonos: towel. Rose spray.

45. Mykonos: towel. Double rose spray.

46. Mykonos: trouser sash. Tree of life in a pot. Bought of woman whose parents came from Aivali.

47. Mykonos: trouser sash. Double rose spray. From same source as **46**.

48. Skopelos: trouser sash. Rose spray.

49. Skopelos: trouser sash ends. Rose spray.

50. Skopelos: trouser sash. Degenerate floral pattern of oriental origin.

51. Cyclades: towel. Rose spray.

52. Cyclades: towel. Rose spray.

53. Skyros: fragment. Rose spray: single darning stitch.

54. Skyros: bed spread. Rose spray and pot plant (tree of life).

55. Thebes: towel. Rose spray: piece at least 100 years old.

56. Albania (Jannina?): trouser sash. Elaborate rose spray; double darning stitch.

57. Albania (Scodra): towel. Rose spray; double darning stitch.

58. Albania (Jannina?): table cloth. Border rose spray, centre elaborate rose spray.

59. Unknown provenance: towel. Degenerate rose spray. Lent by C. H. Hawes, M.A., Trinity College.

60. Crete: bed spread. Worked in wool. Belt of lozenge and zigzag pattern with frieze of cocks and double eagles. This piece shews the degeneration of this pattern to mannikins, cf. **39** and **6**.

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